Downsizing of Tobacco Board

4979. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the statutory strength and the present strength of Tobacco Board;

(b) the number of vacancies in the Board and since when each vacancy is there;

(c) whether Government propose to trim the size of the Board to make it more effective; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) and (b) The statutory strength as well as the present strength of the Tobacco Board is twenty-six. At present, there are no vacancies in the Board.

(c) and (d) The strength of the Board is based on the provisions of the Tobacco Board Act, 1975. Any change in this can be effected only after a thorough assessment of the various aspects of the Act and the relevance to present day requirements.

New State trading outfit

4980. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether under the new Exim policy the import of diesel and petrol is to be handled only by State trading enterprises;

(b) if so, in what manner this proposal could be enforced without the consensus of private players in the oil sector since the petroleum sector has been de-regulated and new marketing companies have entered; and

(c) whether Government would identify a State trading outfit to handle a sensitive commodity like petroleum products the past record of India's State trading enterprises being dismal and STC being wound up and disinvested?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) Import of High Speed Diesel (HSD), Light Diesel Oil (LDO) and Motor Spirit have been always allowed through the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC). This Policy continues even today and IOC is the only designated State Trading Enterprise. It is true that the

marketing of Diesel and Petrol has been opened up for new players. Since there has been no change in import policy, the question of consensus of private players in the oil sector does not arise.

State Trading Corporation of India Ltd. (STC) is not the designated State Trading Enterprise for these products. Nevertheless, the past record of State Trading Corporation of India Ltd. (STC) has not been dismal and it has been making profits consistently. However, STC is being disinvested, and not wound up, under the extant policy of the Government.

Meeting of Coffee growers with Prime Minister

4981. SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether a delegation of Indian Coffee growers met the Prime Minister before his departure for Indonesia;

(b) if so, whether the delegation was assured that Government would look into their problems; and

(c) the details of the steps Government have taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) In order to provide relief to coffee growers, the Govt. of India, besides operating several plan schemes under which various types of financial and technical assistance are provided to the growers, have in the recent past, taken a series of steps for the benefit of the coffee sector. The relief measures include reschedulement of loans of 2000-2001 taken by coffee growers from commercial banks, implementation of an interest relief Scheme by Coffee Board, which provided 5% interest relief to targeted small coffee growers on working capital loans availed by them from the banks, and providing for financial assistance @Rs. 500 per tonne to Indian Coffee exporters for reducing their handling costs.

Recently, once again at the behest of Govt. of India, the Reserve Bank of India has announced a relief package for the coffee growers under which all types of coffee loans (short, medium and long terms including re-phased/ rescheduled loans) extended by banks, which are outstanding as on 30th June, 2002 and not classified as Non-Performing Assets, will be consolidated into a Special Coffee Term Loan (SCTL) with a repayment schedule ranging between 7—9 years and initial repayment holdiy (moratorium) of two years, subject to certain conditions and review thereafter.